



Los Angeles County
Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead



Richard J. Bruckner
Director

December 8, 2010

TO: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Mayor
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe

FROM: Richard J. Bruckner
Director

SUBJECT: LAND ENTITLEMENT PROCESS REVIEW – FINAL REPORT

This is the final report in response to the motion by Supervisor Ridley-Thomas, seconded by Supervisor Yaroslavsky, in which your Board of Supervisors (Board) directed the Department of Regional Planning (DRP) to conduct a comprehensive review of its existing Land Entitlement Process.

Background

On May 25, 2010, your Board directed the DRP to prepare a comprehensive review of case processing, including:

- Identifying specific timeframes for case processing, with performance metrics for processing land use approvals
- Determining measures to streamline the process for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), particularly measures that will expedite Environmental Impact Reports
- Document how DRP complies with the Permit Streamlining Act
- Discussing possible means of expanding the Special Projects Section to process more of the larger projects
- Providing a better means of accounting for those projects which are based on a "deposit" system
- Reaching out to building industry representatives, consultants who regularly process applications and members of the public to solicit feedback concerning both the proposed processing improvements and the fee increases

The Board asked DRP to report back within a six-month timeframe. DRP has submitted to your Board monthly status reports throughout the process. This is DRPs final report in compliance with your Board's directive. Our response includes this letter, which summarizes the entire process, and a comprehensive final report (attached).

Process Summary

To fully respond to the Board's concerns, DRP formed a Stakeholders Committee consisting of representatives from both the building industry and the environmental community; participants included the Building Industry Association, Sierra Club, Santa Monica Mountains Resource Conservation District, planning/engineering consultants, Urban Land Institute and the Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation. A total of six meetings were conducted between June and November 2010; the meetings were facilitated by William DeGroff of Woolpert, which was contracted by DRP to assist with the entire process. Mr. DeGroff has had considerable previous experience with the land entitlement process in County government as he was the author of the Permit and Land Management Solutions (PALMS) Report completed earlier this year.

Each of the Stakeholders Committee meetings were supported by County technical staff from DRP, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Public Health—Environmental Health, County Counsel and the Fire Department. Several meetings of the Technical Committee, consisting of representatives from each of these departments, were held in addition to the Stakeholders Committee meetings to review suggestions and discuss ideas put forward by the Stakeholders.

Identification of Recommended Improvements

Several months into the process review, the Stakeholders Team developed twelve (12) broad improvement categories that focus on enhancing the land entitlement process in Los Angeles County. These improvements include:

1. Restructuring DRP Organization to support increased customer focus, facilitate geographic expertise and a one planner/one project approach to case processing
2. Explore Co-location opportunities with Public Works and the Fire Department to provide a more convenient single location to conduct land development business
3. Create a "Conceptual Plan" Review step to elicit more collaboration and better decision-making in the early stages of a project and eliminate resubmittals of tentative maps
4. Define and Publish Guidelines for "Substantial Conformance" by identifying and documenting explicit standards for plan modifications
5. Establish Improved Tracking of Review Referrals to other departments/agencies and sign MOUs with all participating agencies to establish predictable timeframes and ensure reviews are completed on schedule
6. Enhance the Subdivision Committee Process to increase collaboration between departments, improve communication with applicants and explore the possibility of expanding this concept to other permits
7. Improve the Plan Submission Process by creating a single plan submission location, creating more usable application forms, assigning the responsible planner upon case submission and phasing in electronic submittals

8. Review the CUP Renewal Process to explore simplifying reviews for noncontroversial cases, consider lengthening CUP terms and reducing fees
9. Enhance the Hearing Process by facilitating earlier development of hearing materials and making more electronic hearing files readily available via the web
10. Improve the Land Entitlement Approval Process by establishing guidelines for “conceptual plan” review and developing guidelines for revised submissions and substantial conformance determinations
11. Create an Enhanced Process for Writing New and Revising Existing Ordinances, provide documentation on implementation plans and ensure that there are clear metrics relating to the impact of new ordinances
12. Strengthening the Department's Fiscal and Fee Accounting Process by implementing more detailed project accounting, providing better integration with eCAPS, allowing credit/debit and bank draft payment options along with a number of other improvements.

Improvement Projects

The next step in the process focused on developing immediate start-up projects in each of the broad improvement areas. The goal was to identify immediate projects that could be accomplished without significant additional resources and within a six to 24-month timeframe. The Stakeholders analyzed each of the broad improvement areas and developed a list of specific projects. Certain initiatives, such as DRP Reorganization, are already being implemented. The specific projects endorsed by the Stakeholders Committee are:

Reorganization of DRP

Realign case processing staff into geographic service areas and initiate a focus on single-planner point of contact by moving the environmental review function from Impact Analysis to the case planner within the permitting sections. Benefits of this improvement include more consistent delivery of services, a single point of contact for cases and consistent case oversight.

Co-Location of County Departments

This improvement proposes to co-locate the DRP, Public Works and Fire Department sections and organizational units that are responsible for overseeing the land division process. The co-location effort will require the co-location team to identify the services to be provided, analyze potential co-location sites, address resource needs and complete a move. The benefits of this effort include a primary location for land development customers, dramatically improved opportunities for “One Stop” services and better collaboration between departments on projects.

Redefining “One Stop” Services

The land entitlement process can be redefined to provide new “One Stop” services at multiple points in the process. This would provide increased opportunities for

collaboration, avoid mistakes and misunderstandings and ensure better coordination of conditions of approval between departments.

Intake Improvements

There is an opportunity to greatly improve the case intake process. Ideas include image capture of some submission documents, the creation of an electronic case intake pilot project, the creation of a workflow and electronic submission pilot project; development of financial and submission checklists, and elimination of the case processing backlog. Implementation of these items would result in a reduction of paper submissions, faster routing and better tracking of cases, reduced storage requirements, better understanding by applicant of fees and submission requirements, faster action on reviews and shorter review periods.

Application Review Improvements

This improvement would involve conducting a pilot project for electronic plan review and markup, and formulate a change management plan for electronic plan review and markup. Other jurisdictions are already doing this successfully. The benefits of such an initiative would include testing the viability of electronic plan review and markup for multiple case types, preparing staff for a transition to electronic plan review and markup and leveraging of the existing investment in Enterprise Content Management (ECM) technology.

Tentative Map Simplification

The Tentative Map Simplification Project would reduce the level of engineering detail required for Tentative Map submissions, develop a process for revising engineering details prior to Final Map approval; improve the Subdivision Committee process and improve coordination between departments. This would create a more predictable process, reduce the time and cost required to complete the Tentative Map process, and improve opportunities for making desirable changes in projects.

Substantial Conformance Standards

This improvement would define and document "Substantial Conformance" standards, provide both the applicant and the community an understanding of the rules, identify key measures of substantial conformance and define "tolerance" values for substantial conformance determination. If implemented, this would reduce project "rework", reduce the number of hearings, reduce the time and cost to get projects to construction, provide continued conformance with good project standards and planning practices and ensure better adherence to Conditions of Approval.

Fee Management

There are significant opportunities for improvement in DRP's fee management process. The time collection process for drawdown accounts can be enhanced through more detailed task tracking and implementation of daily or weekly time recording practices. DRP's fixed fee permits must also provide improved activity tracking, and ongoing fee management practices must be developed. Implementation of this would provide more accurate accounting for direct costs, better reporting for drawdown accounts, better forecasts for supplemental drawdown deposits and better fee increase rationale.

Park Fee Calculation

A replacement for the current Park Fee Calculation Program used for land division cases must be developed by creating a new application using Geographic Information Systems technology. The primary benefit of this would be ease of use and avoiding a pending system failure.

Forms and Instructions

DRP needs to develop customer-oriented process documentation for all customer facing processes, create a Web portal for forms and instructions, and develop customer entry versions with an on-line forms library (such as Adobe forms or ECM web forms). If implemented, this would result in less customer confusion: fewer questions; better, more complete and more accurate submissions; less data entry and an easier transition to full electronic submission.

Internal Documentation

Cross department documentation of all processes needs to be developed; such documentation should focus on cross departmental activities. There is also a need to develop standards for service quality and responsiveness. A quality improvement and problem resolution group should also be formed. This would create a continuous improvement process and better and more consistent services.

Referrals

There is a need to develop documentation of all referral requirements, establish standards for referral issuance and replies, create MOUs with referral agencies and to create a referral tracking mechanism with follow up. The benefits of this include more consistent referral responses, improved turn-around time for referrals and fewer last-minute processing of referrals.

Hearings

Standards must be created for electronic hearing packets; DRP may then begin production of electronic hearing packet materials by conducting a pilot project with one or more Regional Planning Commissioners. This would prepare for migration to full electronic hearing packet review and increased utilization of the new hearing room.

Performance Metrics and Measurement

There is a significant need to develop Performance Measurement standards for case processing. The primary benefit is the preparation for implementation of new systems and better performance monitoring.

Future Improvements

Beyond the short-term, future improvement projects will be identified by DRP and the Stakeholders that will continue the progress made with the start-up initiatives. Examples of such projects include the electronic plan-checking pilot and the application review pilot. If proven successful, each of these pilots will be expanded and fully implemented in the land entitlement process. Other measures will certainly be developed as each of these improvements is realized.

Ultimately, future replacement of its permitting system is the largest and most complex long-term technology or process goal in DRP's future. As it was recommended in the

PALMS Final Report, this endeavor will involve half a dozen County departments, significant funding, multiple software solutions and could easily take at least three to five years to complete. Implementation of the improvement projects identified in this report will be critical preparation for any large-scale software implementation.

Fee Accounting Process

The May 25 Board motion directed DRP to provide a better means of accounting for those projects that are based on a deposit system. DRP formed a project team consisting of staff from the Auditor-Controller, the Chief Executive Office and DRP. The team focused on how DRP utilizes eCAPS Time Collection Codes, available reporting mechanisms and identification of areas for improvement. The team has developed a potential solution that would not require significant changes to DRP's existing process and that would provide much more detailed project accounting. This solution includes the use of task-level time collection so that more accurate and up-to-date account information will be available to County staff and project applicants. Improvements to the fee accounting process have also been identified by the Stakeholders Committee as a short-term improvement that DRP should implement. This is discussed in greater detail in the Short-Term Improvements Section of the attached report.

DRP has also completed a further review of its permit fees (flat fees) that were increased as part of the May 25 Board action. This analysis included a review of permits received during Fiscal Year 2009-10 in comparison to the staff costs to process flat fee permits during the same time period. When the increased fees were factored into the calculation, and in consideration of the homeowner/small business fees that were not increased, the analysis concluded that DRP is now operating on a cost-recovery basis. DRP has begun collecting more detailed data for task level processing times for selected flat fee permits; this will provide a means to compare actual costs against the fee being charged in the future.

Next Steps

Much has been accomplished during the last six months but a significant amount of work remains. DRP has identified several strategies that it will pursue to ensure this process continues. These strategies are:

- (1) Commence implementation of short-term improvement projects. The short-term projects must be prioritized and scoped so that implementation can proceed in the most efficient and effective ways possible. The Technical Committee will be refocused into project teams that can work on implementing each initiative.
- (2) Proceed with the PALMS Project. The Land Entitlement Process Review was identified as one of many proposed future tasks in the PALMS Final Report that was released earlier this year. That same report included additional tasks relating to the balance of DRP's permitting processes, its permit inspections, zoning enforcement and inspections as well as cost and accounting measures. Funding to proceed with this project is available. Continuing work on this project is critical to ensuring a thorough and complete review of DRP processes prior to any future technology implementations.

- (3) Continue to hold biannual meetings of the Stakeholders Committee to ensure that solutions developed to implement the recommendations contained in this report are thoroughly reviewed and well grounded. The Stakeholders were polled at their last meeting as to the overall success of this process. There was universal support for DRP's approach and the steps taken to ensure a fair and open dialogue. All Committee members stated a willingness and desire to continue to be involved in the process of developing the best solutions possible.
- (4) Provide quarterly reports to the Board on the progress of DRP's implementation efforts.

Each of these steps is needed to ensure a full and complete response to all of the issues raised in the May 25 Board motion. This includes the identification of additional measures to streamline the CEQA process (partially implemented through DRP reorganization) and in ensuring that all future process changes will comply with the Permit Streamlining Act (implemented in Next Steps, Items 1 and 2 above). DRP will also continue to study methods to either expand the Special Projects Section or further replicate its success in other case processing sections. The DRP reorganization has already taken steps in this regard by moving the environmental review process into the Permits and Land Divisions Sections that are responsible for processing the case, using a single planner as the point of contact.

Please let me know if you would like additional information. I would be happy to brief you in greater detail on any aspect of this process.

RJB:DLS

Attachment

c: Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Department of Public Works
Fire Department
Department of Parks & Recreation
Department of Public Health

PALMS Land Entitlement Review Final Report Los Angeles County



Prepared by
Woolpert, Inc.

December 8, 2010

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1. EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

Project Initiation

At the conclusion of the first phase of the Permit and Land Management Solutions (PALMS) project Woolpert made a number of recommendations for proceeding with implementation. These recommendations focused on issues related to organization, process and technology. As a direct result of the financial constraints facing the County for the current fiscal year, Woolpert was requested to prepare a proposed set of tasks for activities that would be necessary for implementation but did not require substantial financial investments. The resulting proposal, the PALMS Bridge to Implementation, focused primarily on identifying organizational and process opportunities which could be pursued immediately without the requirement for a substantial investment in new technology. The Bridge Proposal also identified key technology pilot projects which could be undertake using the new Electronic Content Management infrastructure being installed in DRP. These “proof of concept” pilot projects would be very useful in planning and executing the eventual technology recommendations. The objective of the Bridge Proposal was to identify a set of immediate tasks which could keep the momentum of the PALMS Project going, while providing activities that required limited financial resources and produced immediate opportunities for improvement.

In the same timeframe, the Department of Regional Planning proposed a series of fee increases for the various Land Entitlement services which they provide. As a condition for approving these fee increases, DRP was required to report back to the Board in six months with recommendations for improving the land entitlement processes. DRP was also charged with convening a committee of stakeholders in the Land Entitlement processes and eliciting their comments and feedback on various organization and process improvements.

It was determined that the best way to meet the Board’s directive was to combine the PALMS Bridge Proposal task for Land Development (one of 11 proposed tasks for improvement) with the formation and participation of a Stakeholders Committee. The Bridge Proposal task was modified to incorporate the formation and facilitation of the Stakeholders Committee and the project was begun in July 2010 with the objective of completion in December 2010 for submission to the Board.

Project Approach

The first task undertaken was to form a Stakeholders Committee that was willing to participate in the organization and process improvement efforts. It was critical that the Committee represent the wide diversity of parties involved in the Land Entitlement processes. Members were selected for their willingness to participate and their familiarity with the Land Entitlement processes of Los Angeles County. Members included representatives from development firms, engineering firms, land development consulting firms and building industry associations. Also included were representatives from public interest groups concerned with the environment, land resources, affordable housing and economic development.

In addition to the Stakeholders Committee of eight members, a Project Team was formed to provide input from the principal County departments involved in the Land Entitlement processes: Department of Regional Planning, Department of Public Works, Fire Department, Department of Parks and Recreation and Health Department’s Environmental Health unit.

The Stakeholders Committee held six facilitated workshops to address the major issues and problems with the Land Entitlement processes, make recommendations for improving the process and reviewing the final recommendations from the County which are included in this report. Each workshop was facilitated by Woolpert, Inc. and the Project Team observed the sessions and was available for clarification and questions when needed. Each workshop followed a pre-defined agenda and the results of each workshop were used to formulate the agenda for the subsequent workshop. Workshop participants were expected to represent the interests of their particular interest group, but to also work for the overall good of the process and its impact on providing good quality development projects. Whenever possible consensus was sought, but due to the diversity of the interests represented consensus was not required.

The initial workshop included a review of the County's PALMS Project and the findings of the Phase I report.

The workshops provided a forum for participants to express their views and interests and to listen to the views and interests of the other participants. Between each workshop, the Project Team would meet to discuss the workshop results and to formulate potential responses to the Stakeholder Committee's findings. Responses were incorporated into the agenda of the next Stakeholders Committee agenda. This evolutionary process resulted in clearly identified issues, a definition and discussion of potential solutions and improvements and the recommendations included in this report.

Issues

It was not difficult to get the Stakeholders Committee to articulate their issues and problems with the current Land Entitlement organization and processes. Each participant had direct personal experience with the organizations and processes of Los Angeles County. To focus the conversation and to avoid redundant review of known problems, the Stakeholders were asked to comment on the issues identified during the PALMS project. By in large, each member of the Stakeholders Committee confirmed that the issues identified in the first phase of the PALMS project were accurate and complete. The participants were then asked to put the issues into their own perspective and provide examples of how these problems and issues impacted their businesses and their clients. Coming to a consensus between the Stakeholders Committee and the County Project Team that there was mutual agreement on the issues and problems was a major step forward in moving towards a "solutions based" focus for this project.

The primary issues identified in the original PALMS Project and confirmed by the Stakeholders Committee were as follows:

- The processes are too paper intensive
- There are redundant and often conflicting processes
- The customer is forced to deal with multiple organizations within the County and there is no single point of contact for coordination and problem resolution
- There is limited collaboration between departments
- There is very limited visibility of the project across County departments
- The payment management and cost accounting system are weak
- There is a lack of a central process control function
- The County fails to focus on the "customer experience"

The Stakeholders Committee then proceeded to identify additional issues that went beyond the original issues identified in the PALMS Project. These can be summarized as follows:

- The overall County process is not collaborative in nature

- The County process requires applicants to invest substantial time and money into project plans and engineering before there is any feedback on project feasibility for approval
- The current process produces an adversarial relationship where applicants are reluctant to consider project modifications because so much time and money have been invested prior to Tentative Map review
- The determination of Substantial Conformance seems unnecessarily rigid for minor modifications
- Special provisions for Substantial Conformance determination need to be put in place for projects that received pre-recession approval so that those projects can proceed to Final Plan approval in a “down-sized” format.
- Schedules and deadlines for responses by referral agencies are not enforced

In summary, the Stakeholders Committee agreed that they need and expect a fair, consistent and predictable process. They realize that not all decisions will be in their favor or that there will not be unforeseen objections to their projects. They just want the process from the County perspective to be fair, consistent and predictable. This point was echoed by the development community as well as the public interest groups.

Recommendations

The Stakeholders Committee took on the challenge of making specific recommendations for improvement. These recommendations are included in the details of this report. The recommendations include both long term and short term recommendations for the County’s implementation of improvement programs.

Long Term Recommendations

The long term recommendations focus on the County’s efforts to implement technology improvement programs in the Land Entitlement processes. Principle among these long term recommendations is the following:

- Implement a system and process for electronic submission and collaboration
- Provide a single source of Land Entitlement information so all departments operate from a common base of information
- Provide a consistent fee management capability
- Implement performance measurements in every aspect of the process
- Provide access to Land Entitlement information to all participants in the process including applicants, community organizations and interested citizens

This study identified a “case management” model which can be followed for delivering all Land Entitlement functions. The model is built on a technology framework that has recently been installed in the DRP for Electronic Content Management (ECM). This represents a new approach to information management for the County and the County should avail itself of this new infrastructure (funded by a CIO technology improvement grant) to pilot some of the most important process improvements identified by the Stakeholder Committee.

Short Term Recommendations

The short term recommendations represent those improvements which can be made within one year and with a minimum investment of financial resources. These recommendations focus primarily on changes to organization and process.

The Stakeholders Committee identified five primary recommendations based on organization:

- Co-locate the resources of the three primary departments (DRP, DPW and Fire) involved in the Land Entitlement processes to a single “development center”
- Eliminate the backlog of current Land Entitlement cases
- Reorganize the DRP Land Entitlement resources to provide a single point of contact for projects, provide beginning to end project coordination and consolidate the project review and the environmental review into a single resource
- Provide a organization structure that facilitates a geographic specialization for reviewers
- Provide a single organization responsible for fee calculation, collection and account management

The Stakeholders Committee identified several process improvement recommendations:

- Redefine the “One-Stop” concept to provide additional opportunities for project collaboration
- Conduct a pilot of electronic submission for the Case Intake process
- Conduct a pilot of the electronic “application review” process
- Implement a new Conceptual Plan review process with a corresponding One-Stop service
- Implement recommendations for Tentative Map simplification in conjunction with an improved Subdivision Committee process. Also review the potential for using the Conceptual Plan concept for Conditional Use Permits and other Zoning Permits
- Review and revise Substantial Conformance standards with special attention to the review of post-recession projects that may require “down-sizing” to be financial viable in the post-recession economy
- Develop criteria for a new fee management process
- Develop and implement a new in-lieu Park Fee calculation process
- Develop new forms and instructions for applicants
- Develop new internal documentation of processes
- Develop new procedures for guaranteeing the timeliness of agency referrals including the creation of interagency Memos of Understanding (MOU)
- Develop improved methods for providing Public Hearing information in an electronic format.
- Develop a plan for capturing and using performance information

Conclusions

There is a pressing need for the County to improve its technology support for the Land Entitlement organizations and processes. However, lacking sufficient financial resources to implement technology improvements, there are significant organizational and process improvements that can be initiated with minimal investment of financial resources. The Stakeholder Committee, working in parallel and concert

with the County Project Team, has identified the most critical improvements that can be made without investing substantial resources in technology. These recommendations can improve the County's Land Entitlement processes for the development community, the public interest groups and the citizens at large.

2. PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH

The PALMS Land Entitlement Review project focused on developing a consensus between the County and the Stakeholders Committee created to review current Land Entitlement processes. The Stakeholders Committee was structured to reflect the multitude of interests of the parties involved in the Land Entitlement process. This included developers, builders, engineering firms, consultants and public interest groups. Key to this process was developing a consensus among the various interests represented on the Stakeholders Committee.

Stakeholders Committee

The Stakeholders Committee consisted of the following members:

Glenn Adamick
JSB Development

Darrell Clarke
Sierra Club, Angeles Chapter

Rob Gilmore
Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation

Ehud Mouchly
READI, LLC

Holly Schroeder
Building Industry Association

Carolyn Ingram Seitz
Carolyn Ingram Seitz & Associates

Mark R Sikand
Sikand Engineering

Clark Stevens
Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains

Facilitator
William (Bill) DeGroff
Woolpert Inc.

Stakeholders Committee Goals

The Stakeholders Committee was established with these specific goals in mind.

Provide for broad representation - The goal of the Stakeholders Committee was to provide a perspective for the external participants in the Land Entitlement process. This committee was

constructed to represent developers, builders, engineers, consultants and public interest groups. The inclusion of a consultant focused on smaller developments helped to ensure that the concerns of small project submissions were also considered.

Promote open discussion – Provide an environment where participants feel free to participate in discussions and contribute to potential improvements. No specific group was favored and all parties were given ample opportunity to contribute.

Reach consensus when appropriate - Gaining consensus was desirable but not essential. It was recognized that the participants represented various interests that would not always coincide with one another. When appropriate, the final report would reflect these differences of opinion.

Provide specific recommendations – The ultimate goal of the Stakeholders Committee was to help the County create a meaningful set of recommendations for improvement. These recommendations should help the County provide more effective and efficient services, deliver good planning practices and provide an opportunity for meaningful input by all impacted parties.

Perform in a collaborative manner – The diversity of interests on the Stakeholders Committee provided ample opportunity for each participant to pursue parochial interests. However, participants were urged to view the issues and provide direction on a higher level with overall community interests in mind. Without exception, the participants met this objective while still representing their own unique perspectives.

Each of the Stakeholders Committee workshops were run as facilitated sessions with an agenda and results from the prior session presented for confirmation. The initial session was intended to provide background on the earlier PALMS activities. The next two sessions were intended to provide the Stakeholders Committee an opportunity to present their views and build consensus as a group. The following two sessions were designed to provide the County an opportunity to lay out potential options for improvement and to get feedback from the Stakeholders Committee. The final session was designed to provide the County the opportunity to present potential recommendations and obtain the Stakeholders Committee's endorsement for subsequent recommendations.

Project Team Participation

In parallel to the Stakeholders Committee the County formed a Project Team consisting of representatives from the Department of Regional Planning ("DRP"), Public Works Department, Fire Department, County Counsel, Environmental Health and the Parks and Recreation Department. These departments are all involved in the entitlement process. The Project Team attended the Stakeholders Committee meetings and provided input when requested. They were at the meetings primarily as observers.

The Project Team also met separately between the Stakeholders Committee meetings to discuss the results of the previous meeting and to provide input for the agenda and content of the next Stakeholders Committee meeting. The members of the Project Team included the following individuals:

Department of Regional Planning

Richard Bruckner
Jon Sanabria
Dennis Slavin
Sorin Alexanian

Ania Onley
Mark Child
Susie Tae
Nooshin Paidar
Mitch Glaser

Department of Public Works

Dennis Hunter
Steve Burger

Fire Department

Janna Masi

Parks and Recreation

James Barber

Public Health Department

Ken Habaradas

County Counsel

Patricia Keane

3. PRIMARY ISSUES

To facilitate the development of a consensus among the members of the Stakeholders Committee, six workshops were held with the Stakeholders Committee. The initial workshop focused on providing the Stakeholders Committee with an understanding of the findings of the Phase I PALMS project. This ensured that all members of the committee had an equal understanding of the purpose of PALMS and the results. In addition, the Stakeholders Committee was asked to comment on the major findings of the initial PALMS project. These included:

- Paper intensive processes
- Redundant and often conflicting processes
- Customer dealing with multiple organizations within the County – no single point of contact
- Limited collaboration between departments
- Very limited visibility across departments
- Weak payment management and cost accounting
- Lack of a central process control function
- Failure to focus on customer experience

During the second meeting the Stakeholders Committee was given an opportunity to comment on each of these findings. In general, everyone agreed that these were all well founded in their experience and represented a good start in identifying the issues associated with the Land Entitlement process.

The Stakeholders Committee then began the process of formulating goals for the Committee based on the above issues and others which were added by the participants. The Committee arrived at the following themes for improvement:

- Improve the process
- Provide and track performance metrics
- Improve cross department communications and functions
- Reduce redundancy
- Focus on customer service and creating a customer friendly environment
- Adhere to schedules and due dates
- Require every project to be subjected to the most stringent review makes simple projects complex
- Provide a single, comprehensive review of projects rather than many individual reviews
- Provide more accurate records of notifications, referrals, action items and due dates
- Better document the entire process from submission through final recordation
- Use electronic plan and document submission
- Use electronic plan review and electronic collaboration
- Provide an opportunity for a project conceptual review prior to final design
- Have reviewing agencies review in a timely and relevant timeframe
- Provide consistency between Subdivision process and EIR process

At the conclusion of the second Stakeholders Committee meeting they identified the following major items which should be the primary focus of the improvement programs.

- The Phase I PALMS findings are accurate and solutions should be found
- The participants want consistent and predictable processes
- The County must enforce deadlines and schedules for all processes
- The County should provide an opportunity for a conceptual project review/approval cycle before plans are too firm to change
- The County should provide a method for electronic plan submission, review and collaboration
- The County should consider co-location of major entitlement agencies
- The County must improve communications within and between departments

These initial findings by the Stakeholders Committee would form the basis for all subsequent discussions and recommendations. Participants were provided an opportunity to comment on these major items and provide specific examples of how these issues impact their ability to conduct Land Entitlement business with the County. Additional items would later be added to this initial list.

Between the second and the third Stakeholders Committee workshop the participants were asked to prioritize the issues that had surfaced during the previous meetings. By this time the list of issues had expanded to include 12 consistent issues the Stakeholders Committee could agree upon. These issues fell into two distinct priority groups. The highest priority consisted of the following items:

Reduce process time

A priority item with most of the members of the Stakeholders Committee was to reduce the processing time required to get a project from initial application to a public hearing for decision. This concern was echoed by the industry side of the Committee and the public interest groups as well. Everyone agreed that the process was too long to reach a decision. Everyone agreed that the extended time for this process was costly to all involved and eventually found its way into the price of housing and other developments.

Reduce the Tentative Map required level of detail

Another high priority item focused on reducing the level of engineering detail required to get approval for a Tentative Map. It was pointed out that because of the current high level of engineering detail required for Tentative Map submission and approval, developers are often unwilling to concede to changes to a project if it is going to require re-engineering for a resubmission of the Tentative Map. They indicated they would be more amenable to changes if these changes could be discussed and reviewed before the large investment in fully engineering the project was made. The participants urged the County to work with the Stakeholders Committee to come up with a process that would facilitate a review and approval of plans that were more flexible and did not require the current level of engineering prior to Tentative Map approval. It was pointed out that the past several years the County has moved to more stringent engineering requirements for Tentative Map approval. Relaxing these requirements at the Tentative Map stage by giving developers ranges within which to comply could improve the process and result in developers being more amenable to proposed changes which improve the overall quality of the project.

Provide flexibility in determining substantial conformance

Another related, high priority item was to provide flexibility in determining substantial conformance between the original Tentative Map and the Final Maps for recordation. Currently the process is relatively strict in determining substantial conformance. If a Final Map is not determined to be in substantial conformance with the original Tentative Map, a costly and expensive re-engineering and resubmission process must be completed to submit a revised map. The developers felt that if guidelines for substantial conformance could be articulated at the time of Tentative Map approval, then they could complete the process more quickly but still within the guidelines of good planning. They requested some flexibility in adjusting portions of the plan that had little impact on the overall design quality of the plan (e.g., small retaining walls where needed) and agreed that some conditions are absolute and cannot be flexible (e.g., fire lane regulations). The objective was to keep small, inconsequential changes from requiring full County review while still retaining the key conditions of approval that cannot be flexible in their administration.

The remainder of the issues were ranked at a lower level of priority, however, it should be noted that all of the issues were considered to be of extreme importance.

Improve communications

All participants agreed that inadequate and ineffective communications was a considerable problem within the Land Entitlement processes. This included communications with applicants, between and within County departments, and with the public interests at large. These ineffective communications can result in conflicting information and confusion during the process of submitting a project for approval. It is often difficult to find the right person to contact for information on a project and its status. On occasion, the information received from one department conflicts with information received from another department. There is no single source of information making it difficult to provide a consistent answer to the same question. The developers and the public are left with the challenge of finding the source of information and the correct information through a series of phone calls and visits to multiple offices. Critical information such as the status of a project and the fees currently paid or due were examples cited as often conflicting.

More consistent staff assignments

Another problem cited by the participants was the confusion caused by assignment of County staff to a project. To the customer, it seems that there is no single person responsible for their project from initial application to public hearing to final recordation. They complained about changing staff assignments within a department and between departments. There was no consistency and no one person to turn to for assistance. They also complained about the division of staff responsible for the project and the staff responsible for the environmental review on the project. These problems occur in all areas of Land Entitlement (Subdivisions, Conditional Use Permits, other Zoning Permits and Plot Plans) and are complicated by the fact that multiple departments are involved. These concerns were identified early in the project and to a large extent are being addressed by the reorganization within DRP.

Geographic location of departments

Another issue was the current location of the five major County departments involved in the Land Entitlement process. These include DRP (Hall of Records), Public Works (Alhambra), Fire (City of Commerce), Parks (Vermont Avenue) and Environmental Health (Baldwin Park). In the

process of getting a project approved, developers must travel to each of these locations multiple times during a project. This travel is also a burden for the public interest groups and the public at large. The participants were consistent in recommending that the major departments involved in the Land Entitlement process (DRP, DPW and Fire) co-locate their resources for better customer service. They cited the value of having co-located resources for the ministerial permits in the County's regional field offices and requested the same approach for the discretionary permits. They recognized that the County does not have the resources to locate resources for discretionary permits in each office but stressed that a single location for these resources would be of tremendous value.

Customer service

The participants were adamant that the County resources involved with the Land Entitlement processes need to develop a focus on customer service. This requires an organizational attitude shift by all of the individuals involved in the Land Entitlement process. It also requires the County management to devote the resources necessary to providing adequate resources to properly serve the development community and the citizens relative to Land Entitlement. Good customer service does not only mean a smiling face across the public counter, but also means the County needs to make the necessary commitments to making the improvements identified in this report.

Excessively paper intense process

A common complaint from the participants was the excessive amounts of paper involved in the process. This is expensive and cumbersome for all including developers, public interest groups and citizens. The land development industry, engineers and consultants are almost totally automated in the preparation of plans submitted to the County, but because of the County's lack of automation capabilities to accept electronic submission, these organizations must print 35 to 42 copies of the maps and drawings for each submission and resubmission to the County. This is extremely ineffective and costly for all parties, including the County. This reliance on paper also makes it difficult and expensive for the public involvement in the process.

Improve fee accounting

Considerable concern was expressed by the participants about the inconsistencies in fee accounting for the Land Entitlement processes. Fees are collected in multiple departments under various rules and formulas. Some fees are assessed on a cost recovery basis using a drawdown account while other fees are collected on a fixed fee basis. Issues on fairness of fixed fees between large projects and small projects were discussed and the value of the services received was also questioned. In addition, the process of maintaining balances in drawdown accounts and collecting additional deposits for those accounts was also criticized. Furthermore, there is no single source for information on fees paid, drawdown deposits or account balances and individual departments cannot provide consistent information. Finally, the large question about the value of services received for fees paid cannot be answered.

Conditional Use Permit renewals

This is an issue that did not surface in the Phase I PALMS project because it is strictly customer centric. Participants complained that some renewals of CUPs are on a five year timeframe and each renewal requires substantial cost to process. They requested that the County consider a longer renewal period such as 10 years for those CUPS that have a high likelihood of a simple

approval. Submitting for these renewals is considered an unnecessary cost. They recognized the revenue impacts on the County for extending the renewal timeframe and indicated a willingness to consider changes in the fee structure to account for lost revenues minus reduced costs to the County.

New Ordinances

Participants requested that the County consider a revised process when approving new Ordinances that would require the completion of any new implementation procedures, rules, forms and documentation prior to effective date of the new Ordinance. This would give the development community, public interest groups, citizens and the County the benefit of clear guidelines before the new Ordinance goes into effect. Participants complained that recent Ordinance changes have gone into effect before the County was prepared to provide clear guidelines and instructions for the new laws.

Documentation and forms

Participants agreed that the current level of documentation of the process is inadequate and that forms are not computer friendly, requiring manual preparation. This is especially problematic for the small developer, one-time developer or citizen who is not familiar with the process.

4. OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Stakeholders Committee addressed opportunities for improvement and made specific recommendations. These recommendations followed the standard PALMS divisions of organization, process and technology. Some of these recommendations span multiple areas but are presented below in the most appropriate categories of opportunities.

Organizational Opportunities

The organization structure of the County plays a significant role in how Land Entitlement processes are administered. The current division of responsibility between five departments contributes to some of the problems confronting the participants in the Land Entitlement processes. Also the specific organization structure within the departments also determines how the participants interact with the County. The following opportunities for improving the organization surfaced during the discussions by the Stakeholders Committee.

Restructure the organization – There was a good deal of discussion about restructuring the organization responsible for Land Entitlement processing. This discussion focused primarily on DRP in their role as the primary agency responsible for administering the Land Entitlement processes. The potential benefits of restructuring the DRP organization are as follows:

- Support an increased customer focus
- Facilitate a single responsible planner approach
- Provide an opportunity for creating and using the “community expert” approach
- Improve management of case assignments, workload management and performance
- Eliminate the existing backlog

Co-location for DRP, DPW and Fire – The problems associated with the decentralized locations of the Planning, Public Works and Fire departments relative to Land Entitlements for discretionary permits is substantial. The current geographic distribution of offices in downtown Los Angeles, Alhambra and Commerce not only requires applicants and the public alike to travel between offices; it renders the ability to provide the enhanced one-stop services very difficult. The benefits of locating these Land Entitlement processes for discretionary permits into a single location was compared to the creation of regional one stop office services currently provided for ministerial permits. The benefits of the proposed co-location are as follows:

- Provide a more convenient, single location to transact most land development business for discretionary permits
- Improve inter-departmental communications
- Share more information resources
- Facilitate more “One Stop” service opportunities
- Facilitate a single cashier concept
- Create a “customer care” model that is consistent across the land development processes

Process Opportunities

Most of the improvement recommendations fall into the area of process improvements. Process improvements are typically the improvements that most directly impact the participants on the Stakeholders Committee. The following opportunities for improving the processes surfaced during the discussions of the Stakeholders Committee.

Conceptual Plan – The opportunity to have a project reviewed at the conceptual level before making substantial investments in engineering is very appealing to the participants from the development community. A conceptual plan would also provide an opportunity for public interest groups and interested citizens to review projects and make comments and suggestions for improvements prior to the Tentative Map public hearing process. The conceptual plan would fall between the current “One-Stop” project conceptual idea and process review service, and the Tentative Map submission and review process. A conceptual plan would not involve a public hearing process but would simply provide an opportunity for staff review and comments. For complex projects developers could avail themselves of multiple conceptual plan submissions. The staff would review the conceptual plans, make comments and suggestions, and would provide tentative guidelines for potential conditions of approval that might be required during the Tentative Map process. The conceptual plan concept is an effort to make the development process more collaborative with the ultimate objective of bringing better project plans to the approval processes before Hearing Officers, Planning Commissioners and the Board of Supervisors. The conceptual plan can also provide developers with a community outreach vehicle for initiating a collaborative process with the community. The County could make applicant participation in the conceptual plan process contingent on participation in a community outreach effort based on the conceptual plan. The conceptual plan process should be fee based on a full cost recovery model. The benefits of the conceptual plan approach are as follows:

- Provides an opportunity for applicants to have a review and evaluation of projects before applicants have made a substantial investment in project engineering services
- Provides the County and opportunity to intervene early in projects to provide guidance to applicants on potential problems, potential conditions of approval, guidelines for flexibility at the Tentative Map stage and to encourage community outreach efforts by the applicant
- Makes the Land Entitlement process more collaborative and more productive with less rigid submission and approval/rejection activities
- Provides a vehicle to begin early community outreach by applicants for potential projects

Substantial conformance – The determination of substantial conformance most often occurs when a Final Map is submitted for recordation through the Public Works Department. Final Maps must be in substantial conformance with the Tentative Map or a complex plan revision is required. This revision can cause the applicant to incur substantial additional costs for engineering and delays in the project execution. Currently the criteria for determining substantial conformance are rigid but not clearly documented. Participants felt that this process of determination is arbitrary in its current implementation.

In addition, participants alerted the County to a potential problem which could arise as the economy begins to recover. With better economic conditions, developers will begin to initiate projects requiring Final Map approval where Tentative Maps have already been approved but have been on hold due to adverse economic conditions. But based on the new economic reality it may not be practical to bring “products” to market that are based on pre-recession economic

decisions. Applicants may wish to “downsize” their projects into products that are economically viable under the new realities of the current housing and development climate. Downsizing could mean fewer units, but it could also mean smaller units. Unless a process is developed by the County for allowing some of these “downsized” projects to be approved under the umbrella of substantial conformance, developers will be required to go through the costly process of obtaining a revised plan or begin the Tentative Map approval process from the start. In some cases the economics of this prospect may result in delays to the project or abandonment of the project resulting in losses of jobs and economic activity for projects that have already been approved. Furthermore, “downsizing” projects may provide an opportunity for the public and the County to negotiate with applicants for increased open space, expanded parks or lower density projects providing an overall improvement to the community.

The benefits of the revised substantial conformance criteria are as follows:

- Better definition and documentation of the criteria for determining substantial conformance
- More reasonable guidelines for determining substantial conformance while maintaining high standards for projects
- Reduced costs for complying with current tight substantial conformance criteria
- Quicker increases in construction related employment

Referrals – The Land Entitlement process requires a process for referrals to many agencies to obtain approvals/clearances for discretionary permits. These referrals may go to agencies external to the County to determine the plans compliance with standards for the referral agency. A classic example is referral to the Sanitation Districts to ensure that there is sufficient waste treatment capacity to accommodate the proposed new development. The participants described their frustration with referrals and responses that are not made in a timely manner that result in a postponement or delay in their project. Improving the referral process is critical to avoiding unforeseen delays. The benefits of the revised referral process are as follows:

- Elimination of lost referrals
- Reduction in hearing postponements due to late referrals
- Potential for enacting MOUs between the County and referral agencies to ensure timely referral responses
- More accurate status reporting of referral actions

Subdivision Committee – The Subdivision Committee serves an important function in the Tentative Map process. Currently applicants receive a formal report on the status of their project and written details on the necessary changes that must be made and/or potential conditions of approval which will be applied to the project. Subdivision Committee is essentially a one-stop service because all departments are present to state their positions on the project. However, the Stakeholders Committee participants did not see a great deal of value in the process other than forcing the County to meet a specific date to provide a formal status report on the project. The Stakeholders Committee would like the Subdivision Committee meetings to be more collaborative and would like to have the individuals from the departments be able to enter into collaborative discussions about project changes. Currently, the County participants serve primarily as messengers carrying the report to the meeting and explaining the County’s position. They are not empowered to discuss options or make decisions. On technical matters they simply refer the applicant to the appropriate technical unit or expert in the County.

In addition, the departmental reports may actually conflict with one another or may be inconsistent. County departments have not reviewed other department's reports prior to the meeting and there has been no discussion between departments to iron out inconsistencies. In some cases they may have factual errors or be based on incorrect assumptions. But there is no opportunity to discuss these issues during the actual Subdivision Committee meeting. Requiring the applicant to return for yet another Subdivision Committee meeting adds at least four weeks to the process, even for small changes due to the calendaring of the Subdivision Committee meetings. The benefits of revising the Subdivision Committee meeting procedures are as follows:

- County participants would be prepared to respond to options and proposed revisions
- County participants would have discussed the project prior to the meeting to identify and eliminate contradictions and inconsistencies in the departments' positions
- Fewer iterations through the Subdivision Committee process could reduce the time required to get staff clearance and proceed to Public Hearing
- Developers could offer more creative and beneficial options to improve the overall quality of the project in a collaborative environment

Plan Submission – Plan submission is currently a cumbersome process beginning with the fact that the applicant must submit as many as 35 copies for initial submission and each subsequent revision. Participants also felt that the current forms are difficult to use in their current electronic form (Microsoft Word) and would prefer an Adobe PDF fillable form. They also felt that instructions and documentation were lacking in completeness and clarity. Plan submission now involves a front counter person or a planner who will not be involved in the project review. There was a strong desire to identify and assign the responsible planner and make them responsible for coordinating all aspects of the project review including any environmental or CEQA reviews. Consistency in dealing with a single individual was a high priority for the Stakeholder Committee.

Participants were in strong support of the County implementing an electronic plan submission process. The current paper process is cumbersome and expensive. Most discretionary plans, even for small projects, are prepared using a computer and computer aided drafting (CAD) systems. Documents in the Adobe PDF format are a standard in the industry and all of the drafting systems can produce PDF documents. Until the County can offer electronic plan submission the Committee would like the County to carefully review the need for some many copies and reduce that number wherever they can. These recommendations from the Stakeholders Committee are in line with the recommendations of the Phase I PALMS project.

The Committee also wants the County to adopt a consistent fee calculation and collection process which allows for electronic payments through bank drafts, debit cards and credit cards. This would be especially useful in adding to drawdown balances. The benefits of improving the plan submission processes are as follows:

- Single location for submission of all plans (Web site or FTP site)
- Reduction in paper to be processed
- Reduced cost of submission
- Quicker assignment of the planner for review and coordination of the application review process

- Faster turnaround of incomplete applications and resubmission of missing components
- Easier payment processes
- Provide better plan submission consultation

Fee Accounting – The Stakeholders Committee was clear that the fee calculation, payment and balance reporting from the County are inconsistent and often inaccurate. The fee, payment and balance information is not available across all departments. Financial issues must be directed to each individual department. Drawdown account balances become critical as a project approaches Public Hearing and balances are only accurate as of the last posted payroll which may be as out of date as three weeks earlier. There is no single report where an applicant can see all of the charges that have been made to their drawdown accounts to check their accuracy in a timely manner. There is also no way to account for the amount of services provided for the fees collected. These positions are very consistent with the findings of the Phase I PALMS project. The benefits of improving the Fee Accounting processes are as follows:

- More accurate accounting for customer paid fees
- Better accounting practices and financial reporting
- Improved reporting on cost recovery levels and fee increase requests
- Better justification of fees collected for services delivered

CUP Renewals – The Committee requested that certain types of CUPs be considered for extension of the renewal period. The current process requires the preparation of an application after five years for a renewal. In some types of CUPs this appears to be unnecessary and a 10 year renewal period would be more appropriate. The Committee requested that the County review all CUP types and determine which ones could be extended to 10 years. The Committee recognized that there is a revenue implication for the County. The benefits of extending some CUP renewal periods are as follows:

- Reduced processing effort for renewal applications
- Reduced cost to both County and applicant
- Extension would only apply to CUP types that can reasonably be extended

Public Hearings – The Committee felt that the Public Hearing process could be improved by making information on cases available electronically over the Web. This would allow greater access by the public in general. They also indicated that it would be a benefit to applicants if Public Hearing materials were made available to applicants earlier so that any errors or inconsistencies could be identified and corrected before the general public reviews the documents. This could potentially reduce time spent during the hearing correcting these items or avoid potential postponements and delays. During discussions between the consultant and the Planning Commissioners there was a stated desire to reduce the amount of paper they have to manage for each case. Making the process more electronic was seen as a positive move. The benefits of improving the Public Hearing process are as follows:

- Reduction in distribution of paper Hearing documents
- Easier and earlier access to the Hearing documents for the public and applicants
- Reduction in paper which must be handled by Planning Commissioners
- Availability of archived documents to the public

Forms and documentation – The Committee was generally critical of the lack of documentation on the process. While much of the information pertaining to the entitlement process is contained in laws and ordinances, that information is difficult to use. There is a real need for clear and concise documentation of the entitlement process and the County’s procedures. This needs to be coordinated with a revision of most forms into electronically fillable formats. The Committee expressed concern that first time developers, small developers and citizen applicants were seriously disadvantaged and incurred substantial delays in completing small projects because of the lack of clear documentation. The benefits of improving forms and documentation are as follows:

- Provides assistance to the small project applicant, especially first time developers, small developers and citizen applicants
- Allows electronic submission of all forms
- Improves data consistency and accuracy
- Reduces time spent by staff explaining the process and procedures

One-Stop services – The Committee generally viewed the concept of “one-stop” services as a positive addition to the entitlement processes. The County currently provides a “one-stop” meeting for applicants prior to initial application submission. During the Committee discussions it became apparent that “one-stop” was a concept that could be applied at several points within the Land Entitlement process. Beyond the Subdivision processes, the One-stop concept could even be applied to Conditional Use Permits, other Zoning Permits and complex Plot Plans. The committee identified six points in the Land Entitlement process where “one-stop” services could provide substantial benefits. The Committee agreed that these “one-stop” services should be voluntary and fee based.

The Committee recommended that the County broaden the definition of “one-stop” beyond the current initial one-stop meeting. One-stop should be any service which brings together all of the departments involved to provide the applicant with a unified County response. The Committee identified the following six points in the process where a one-stop service could be beneficial.

- Pre-Project Consultation – This is the current one-stop service provided by the County
- Conceptual Plan Review – This would provide a one-stop service to review the new Conceptual Plan submission described above
- Detailed Plan Review – This is the review of the Tentative Map and is currently performed at Subdivision Committee meetings
- Setting of Conditions – This would be a one-stop meeting to review the conditions of approval
- Pre-Hearing Review – This would be a “one-stop” service to review the Public Hearing materials and staff recommendations
- Final Map Substantial Conformance Review – This would be a “one-stop” service to discuss the substantial conformance determination

The objective of these new “one-stop” services is to make the entire process more collaborative. These services should also be revenue neutral, based on a fee structure that reflects the preparation and participation time required by the County. Participation in the new “one-stop” services could be made contingent upon the applicant participating in an active outreach program to provide information about proposed projects to public interest groups, community organizations and interested citizens.

Implementation of these new “one-stop” services is not really practical until the co-location recommendations are implemented.

Technical Opportunities

The Stakeholders Committee also reviewed the opportunities for improvement associated with the implementation of new technologies to support the Land Entitlement processes and the Land Entitlement organizations. This discussion focused around creating a common set of process definitions that could be deployed for all Land Entitlement activities: Subdivisions, Conditional Use Permits, other Zoning Permits and Plot Plans.

This set of common processes reflect a proposed “to be” model which follows the “case management” best practices model. Case management is a good model to use for the Land Entitlement processes and has been adopted by many planning and land development agencies across the country. Case management implies that once a case is initiated an electronic case folder is created to contain all of the relevant information, forms, documents and drawings that are related to that case. Case folders can be moved through the organization in serial and parallel processes to complete the case processing following standard task templates for each type of case. At each step of the process, individuals can add information to the case file and can indicate their approval/rejection to move the case to the next step. The benefit of an electronic case management system is that the latest information is available to all participants including the applicant and other external parties. Through the use of security privileges the information can be protected, while still making it available for all interested parties to see. Case management can also be used to track performance measures as the case moves through the system. This provides information for staff loading, workload balancing and process performance measurement.

The County DRP with funding from the County Chief Information Office (“CIO”) has recently installed an Electronic Content Management (ECM) system which can serve as the foundation for a full Land Entitlement case management system. The new ECM has capabilities to provide most of the identified process requirements with little or no modification. This system can be configured to perform the tasks and to manage the documents associated with those tasks. Custom modules or integration with other systems such as GIS can be developed when required. The Phase I PALMS project recommended that DRP use the new ECM system to develop one or more pilots for a case management implementation.

The ECM system recently installed in DRP is the ECM Documentum product and has been selected by the CIO’s Office as the County-wide solution. It is covered under a master agreement that is available to all County departments. The system installed in DRP provides the basic infrastructure and software required for a case management system. The current system is more than capable of supporting the pilot projects proposed in the Phase II PALMS Bridge Proposal. It will require additional infrastructure, design and configuration services and implementation support to deploy a production case management system.

During this task, working with the Project Team, Woolpert developed a set of standard process definitions that can be used as a “to be” model of case management. These are high level “to be” models based on the “as is” models developed during the Phase I PALMS project. They group common process functions into 12 process functions. These “to be” process functions can be combined together into workflows for each of the entitlement and permit processes. The primary focus of this task was to review the Subdivision functions for Tentative Maps, Final Maps, environmental reviews and the Park fees. The Phase I PALMS project recommended a “Bridge Proposal” that addressed the other types of entitlement permits including Conditional Use Permits, other Zoning Permits, Building Permits, Construction Permits

and Plot Plans. The “Bridge Proposal” also recommended addition reviews of the cash/fee processes, enforcement functions and pilot projects for case management.

The 12 common process functions were defined so they meet all of the business functions identified in the Phase I PALMS project. These common process functions were shared with the Stakeholders Committee and discussed. The objective of those discussions was to consider how they could support the process improvements identified by the Stakeholders Committee. The following is a description of the 12 common processes.

One-Stop Services – One-stop services are a collaborative process involving the County and applicants. As a process, one-stop services require the ability to share documents and drawings and to record actions/recommendations/decisions. One-stop services require that multiple departments be able to submit information, review information provided by other departments, comment on information and share that information with the applicants. They may also require that information be shared with third parties such as public interest groups, community groups and citizens.

Intake – The process of accepting applications and plans is currently a manual process involving paper submissions and counter personnel performing initial reviews of the application and the submission materials. Future intake processes need to move to an electronic model which receive applications and plans and automatically creates an initial case file, performs an electronic intake review, accepts/rejects the submission based on completeness and validation of data and assigns the case to a case manager, reviewer or supervisor. Electronic intake could process scanned documents, documents submitted over the web or provide an interactive forms input by the applicant. The applicant should be provided with electronic check lists of required submission material by type of permit and a corresponding checklist of potential fees. To the extent possible, fees should be calculated electronically.

Application Review – In an electronic submission environment, application review can be focused on the content of the applications and submission documents. If the intake process has validated the data fields that have defined values and validated the presence of required submission documents, the application review process can focus on providing the capabilities needed for the assigned personnel to review the content of the variable data and the completeness of the submission documents. This includes making sure the submission materials are appropriate for the permit requested and that the quality of the materials is up to the standards required for the permit requested. The application review should also electronically validate the address and ensure that it is in the proper jurisdiction and assign any other appropriate geocodes that will be needed during the review process, e.g., school district, sewer district, park planning district, community, homeowners association, etc..

For incomplete or insufficient submissions a list of deficiencies should be prepared for return to the applicant with instructions for re-submission. Fees calculations should be reviewed and any adjustments should be made at this stage. If accepted, the applicant should be notified and provided information on the fees that have been calculated, drawdown account deposit requirements and payment options available. This would include estimated in-lieu park fees. Final park fees would be calculated later in the process.

The final steps in the application review process would be to prepare an estimated review schedule which details the major steps in the review process, additional submission deadlines if any, estimated plan review dates, estimated one-stop service dates and an estimated hearing date based on the application review date. This schedule should also include all required referrals and

required deadlines for referral responses and submissions, as well as disclaimers that any missing application information will alter the estimated dates.

The information from the application review process should be electronically returned to the applicant. The case should be put into a suspense status until payments are received. At that time application review should be marked as complete and tasked to the next steps in the process.

Tasking – Tasking is a process which occurs throughout the Land Entitlement process. Tasking is the act of assigning a work task to a role or individual and requires completion of the assigned task. Tasks have assignment dates and completion dates. Tasking should follow a prescribed task template wherever possible. However, an ad hoc task creation and assignment facility should be provided. Ad hoc tasks may also be cancelled on rare occasions. There should also be easy facilities to reassign cases individually or by role/individual as personnel changes dictate.

Tasks should be assigned to roles whenever possible, but in some instances may be assigned to individuals. Task templates will be required for each type of permit processed as a Land Entitlement function. Through task templates and tasking activities, the system will create a workflow for the case to follow from Intake to Public Hearing. Tasks may be assigned in serial fashion or in parallel where the workflow dictates.

Tasks should be able to be completed with multiple outcomes such as approval, denial, clearance, rejections and return for resubmission. Each of these outcomes can trigger different workflows and subsequent tasking.

Tasks should also be able to be associated with specific documents that may be completed or modified as part of the task execution. This would include drawing markups, deficiency notices, completion lists and referral requests. All tasks must be tagged with start dates, due dates and end dates. This will provide the information necessary to update case processing schedules, provide work performance statistics, case status and progress reports and support workload balancing. Case tracking information should be made available to applicants via the internet.

Project Review – Project review is a process that requires the professional judgment of a planner or other professional in the Land Entitlement process. These judgments include determining the plans conformance to laws, ordinances, Regional Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors standards, general plans, specific plans, neighborhood standards, park and trail standards, fire standards, environmental health standards and compliance with environment laws and regulations (CEQA).

These determinations require professional judgments and cannot reasonably be automated. However, a well designed system will support these professional judgment processes with data and tools to record findings. This would include the ability to perform plan review and plan markups. An electronic plan review/markup tool is essential to the success of the Land Entitlement technology efforts. Such a tool will allow the planner to review the plans, set the scale, make measurements, calculate areas, provide notations and comments and generate versions of the markups. It will also allow the planner to quickly determine what changes, additions and deletions have been made on plan resubmissions.

Plan review should also facilitate the reviewer's effort to set conditions of approval. This should include standard conditions of approval by permit type and custom conditions of approval unique to the specific plan. This creation of conditions of approval should provide a consistent data base

of conditions associated with a plan and provide reporting capabilities to ensure that all conditions are eventually satisfied.

Finally, the plan review process should provide a facility for indicating completion of the task and recording the disposition of the activity, e.g., Approval, Denial, Clearance, Rejection or Return for Correction. It should also provide a formal electronic stamp and signature facility where required.

The Regional Planning ECM implementation provides many of these basic capabilities including the plan review and markup software.

Referrals – Referrals are essentially tasks that are assigned to external agencies such as the sanitation district, school district, a water company, CalTrans, etc. Referrals can be handled in two different ways and it will be necessary to support both of these methods.

The first method, and the most desirable is to make the referral internal to the County's Land Entitlement system. Notification would be sent to the referral agency that their review and comments are required for the project at hand. They would then be directed to a web site run by the County where they would be provided with the necessary tools to conduct their review, report their findings, provide approval/denial/clearance/rejection actions and sign off the referral completion. The tools required would include plan review/markup and condition of approval creation tools. This does require the agencies to subscribe to the service for security reasons, but requires only minimal computer equipment to implement since all of the software runs on the County's servers. This approach is very technically feasible and is currently being used by several cities in the Southern California area. The County Fire Department is currently participating in a pilot of this approach with the City of Santa Clarita.

The second method will require transmission of a referral notification to the agency either electronically, by fax or by mail. The agency would then process the referral request in their own systems and return the results either electronically, by fax or by mail. The results will then need to be recorded in the County system. This method would likely be required for State and Federal agencies.

Both of these methods can be supported by referral tracking and reporting capabilities to ensure that referrals are completed in the required timeframe. The County should work with the referral agencies to establish Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) that clearly spell out the agencies' responsibilities and commitments to meeting the time constraints of the referral process.

Notifications – Throughout the Land Entitlement process it is necessary to send notifications to agencies, organizations, applicants and the public. These communications are generally one way communications for which a response is not required. Notifications for which a response is required should use the tasking or referral process to ensure that replies are received by the due date. Notifications must be able to support letters, memos, forms and instruction documents. Notifications must support e-mail, fax or hard copy letter notifications. They should be supported by electronic signature and should be stored in the document management portion of the system.

Cash and Expense Accounting – The system must provide facilities for supporting the fee calculation, cash collection, expense accounting and financial reporting required for the Land Entitlement process. This capability should be able to support flat fee services and drawdown account services. It must support fixed charges and labor based charges for work performed on a cost recovery basis. The accounting must be able to track information by staff member, case

number and activity codes to provide the types of financial management information required to effectively ensure full cost recovery and to justify fee rates.

It is recommended that any cash and expense accounting components be integrated with the County's central accounting system, eCAPS. This will ensure consistency and provide audit capability. This component should also be tied to electronic cash registers.

During the Phase I PALMS project cash and expense accounting were identified as problem areas throughout the permit and land management activities. As part of the Phase I PALMS Bridge proposal, a separate task for addressing these problems was proposed. This would ensure that a common financial management approach is taken for all applications.

Clearance/Approvals/Denials/Rejections/Re-submissions – Throughout the Land Entitlement processes it is necessary to assign a status code to a task or referral. Generally, most tasks have two possible outcomes that generally equate to a “yes or no” action. Depending on the status the workflow is determined from the task template. These status decisions should be configurable in the system and should provide the ability to record date of action, person responsible and affix electronic signatures or stamps to the actions. This should be done in a consistent manner across all tasks.

Hearings – The Public Hearing process is conducted by Hearing Officers, the Regional Planning Commission and/or the Board of Supervisors. There is a Hearing preparation process which requires compliance with a very specific schedule of notifications and events. The tasking, referral and notification functions could support this Hearing preparation process. The Hearing process can also benefit by having electronic information available for applicants, public interest groups and citizens to review prior to the Hearing. The approval/denial process can also be used to record the results of the Hearing and the plan review functions can be used to record any last minute conditions of approval attached at the Hearing.

Process and Performance Monitoring – The case management model for the Land Entitlement process promotes good process and performance monitoring opportunities. By embedding time and date stamps in each of the tasks, the County can effectively measure each type of activity for execution times, delays, missed due dates and repetitive steps. A flexible reporting tool will be required to report this information for management review. A performance based dashboard can make performance data and work statistics available on an individual, work group, section or departmental level in a real time environment. This is especially valuable when monitoring customer responsiveness, backlogs and staffing assignments.

5. SHORT TERM IMPROVEMENT PLANS

During the course of reviewing the Land Entitlement process with the Stakeholders Committee and the Project Team, several opportunities for making immediate improvements surfaced and were discussed. Generally these improvement efforts could begin immediately and most could be completed within a year. These improvements all have the potential to result in improvements that will have a positive impact on the Land Entitlement process. While these improvements have costs associated with them, most of them do not require substantial investments.

Most of these improvements would have even more impact if combined with long range improvements to the technology supporting Land Entitlements. Some of these improvements such as reorganization have already been initiated and are already beginning to improve the processes.

The following is a brief description of the potential short term improvements, the anticipated benefits and the steps needed to execute those changes.

Re-organization

Several Stakeholders Committee recommendations addressed the potential benefits from re-organization of the Department of Regional Planning. All of these recommendations have been addressed by the recently completed re-organization in DRP. The complete roll out of this re-organization is expected by January 1, 2011.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Re-alignment of case processing staff - Align the case processing staff so that there is a clear line of authority for each case processing Section.

Geographic assignments – Create geographic specializations within groups to address unique community characteristics.

Beginning to end case processing – Make case assignments so that the same planner handles a case from initial intake to Public Hearing.

Environmental reviews – The planner responsible for the case also is responsible for the environmental reviews.

BENEFITS

More consistent delivery of services – Realignment of staff and geographical specializations will provide more consistent delivery of services.

Single point of contact – Providing one planner to be responsible for the case from its inception to completion, including the environmental reviews, will provide consistency to the Land Entitlement process for the applicant.

Consistent case oversight – Restructuring the groups to provide consistent management oversight will ensure consistency within the process. This will allow managers to control the workflow

through the department and their sections. It will facilitate the movement of resources as needed to eliminate bottlenecks and backlogs.

PLAN

Review current organization structure – Completed

Develop new organization plan – Completed

Roll out new organization structure – In Progress, completion date January 3, 2010

Backlog Elimination

During the discussions with the Project Team it became apparent that a large amount of the delay in processing Conditional Use Permits is due to the substantial backlog that currently exists. When cases are received they are received by LDCC and then placed in a cabinet until the next available planner can be assigned and begin work on the case. This can result in a 3 to 6 month delay before a case review is even started. The backlog consists of approximately 80 to 100 cases. Elimination of the backlog and implementing procedures to keep the backlog from reoccurring could reduce the processing time for CUPs tremendously.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Eliminate the current backlogs – Reduce the backlogs to no more than two weeks for case assignment and initiation of case processing

Future backlogs – Implement procedures to prevent future backlogs

BENEFITS

Eliminate delay in starting case review – If the backlog was eliminated, then planners could begin work on new cases immediately after new cases are filed, reducing the time to complete the case by 3 – 6 months.

Provides immediate feedback to applicant – Provides the applicant with an improved sense of service by starting the case shortly after filing.

PLAN

Catalog the current backlog – Survey the cases currently in the backlog to determine approximate staff requirement to complete the cases in the backlog.

Define priorities – Prioritize the cases in the backlog to maximize the rate of reduction (e.g. move the easier cases to the front of the line).

Secure resources – Identify the funding sources available to secure the additional planner resources needed to eliminate the backlog. Options for resources may include overtime, planners from other cities who have surplus time, returning recent layoffs to service, etc.

Conduct a backlog reduction project – Closely monitor the cases in the backlog and track the completion of cases to show progress. Separate the backlog cases from the ongoing cases. Do not have a planner mix regular cases and backlog cases in their daily work schedule. Dedicate specific hours or days to backlog reduction.

Backlog monitoring – Implement strict backlog monitoring standards to ensure that the backlog does not re-occur. Provide processes for automatic management escalation to ensure the backlog does not build up again.

Co-location

Many of the improvements identified by the Stakeholders Committee assume that the key organizations involved in the Land Entitlement process are co-located into a single location. Co-location was identified by the Committee as a major step forward in improving the services provided by the County. Many of the improved “one-stop” services identified by the Committee rely on co-located resources to make those services practical. Initial co-location efforts could begin with personnel responsible for land entitlements from DRP, and Public Works and Fire Departments. The co-location should have a single front counter intake function and a single cash collection process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Establish a co-located development center – Start the co-located center for discretionary entitlement permits only. These are permits which applicants must currently apply for at DRP’s downtown location.

Provide a single intake process – All applications and submissions at the co-location center should come through a single public counter process.

Provide a single cashier – Set the co-location site up with a single cashiering function.

Use co-location to initiate new “one-stop” services – Use the co-location as an opportunity to roll out the new “one-stop” services described below.

Staff the co-location center – Staff the center with personnel currently processing discretionary permits in DRP, Public Works and Fire. Do not co-locate personnel from Parks and Environmental Health at this time. Provide electronic capabilities to involve Parks and Environmental Health in “one-stop” services (e.g. web conferences, teleconferences, etc).

Staff assignments - Staff would remain with their current departments from a personnel perspective but should report to a single development center manager who has overall responsibility for the operations of the co-location center and processes. This would preserve career paths and promotion opportunities within their “home” departments.

BENEFITS

Better customer service – The co-location center should be able to provide better customer service by providing most necessary entitlement services in a single location.

New one-stop services – Provides a co-located operation for land development services that support the proposed new one-stop services.

Reduced customer travel time – Customers would be able to come to one location to receive services rather than the current three locations (downtown, Alhambra, Commerce).

Better collaboration between staff – Co-location will promote better collaboration between staff working on the same case.

PLAN

Identify staffing requirements – Identify the staffing that will be needed to support a co-location center.

Identify resources needed - Identify requirements for space, public counters, furniture, computers, networks, etc.

Document criteria for co-location site – Develop a set of criteria for selecting the new site.

Identify potential sites – Investigate potential sites for co-location center focusing on the minimum disruption to current operations.

Select a site – Select a site based on the criteria established for site selection.

Timetable for move – Develop a timetable for the necessary moves necessary.

Site specific planning – Develop a site specific plan for the facility and the actual move.

Public Information Plan – Develop a public information plan to notify applicants, industry and citizens of the impending changes.

Move resources to new site – Move the personnel resources to the new site with minimal disruption to applicant services.

Redefining One-Stop

One-Stop services can be very beneficial to applicants and the County alike. One-Stop services generally provide an opportunity for the applicant and the County to discuss aspects of the projects and design issues in a collaborative environment. The Stakeholder Committee was very supportive of the County providing more opportunities for collaboration at various points in the Land Entitlement process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop new “one-stop” services – Develop new “one-stop” services for conceptual plans, conditions of approval, pre-hearing and substantial conformance. Improve the current one-stop services for initial project review and Subdivision Committee.

BENEFITS

Increased collaboration – New and improved one-stop services would provide a greater opportunity for collaboration on projects, reducing the bureaucratic back and forth process which now exists.

Reduce Subdivision Committee resubmissions – New one-stop services could reduce the number of resubmissions required to get through the Subdivision Committee process.

Early public outreach – The conceptual plan one-stop service may provide an opportunity for earlier public outreach.

Reduced costs – Both the County and developers could reduce their costs by having fewer resubmissions through the Subdivision Committee process.

Better projects presented for Hearing – A collaborative approach should produce better projects for presentation at Public Hearings.

PLAN

Develop new one-stop plans – Working with the Stakeholders Committee, develop a plan for new one-stop services including fee structure.

Legal issues – Working with County Counsel, identify all changes that must be made to ordinances to implement the proposed one-stop services.

Develop documentation – Develop internal documentation and customer instructions for the new one-stop services.

Public information plan – Develop a public information plan to advise industry and citizens of the new services and their impact on the entitlement process.

Phased implementation – Roll out one new one-stop service at a time.

Intake Improvements

Intake is currently a process performed by LDCC at the public counter. This process is currently based on the submission of hard copy applications and plans. As the County moves to an electronic submission environment, the Intake process will change substantially and will be performed by electronic computer applications to the maximum extent possible. The Intake functions may also be merged with those application review processes which can be automated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Conduct pilot projects – Conduct various pilot projects with document capture, electronic submission and workflow using the DRP ECM system.

BENEFITS

Test electronic submission – Provides an opportunity to test the benefits associated with document capture, electronic submission, workflow and electronic plan checking/mark up without making a substantial investment in new technology.

Improved operational services – Provides some direct benefit to operational services by capturing and using real documents in the pilot project.

PLAN

Document image capture – Begin capturing some of the initial submission documents using the County's new ECM system.

Intake pilot project – Conduct an Intake pilot project using the new ECM system.

Workflow and electronic submission pilot project – Conduct a pilot project with applicant electronic submission using the new ECM system.

Develop financial and submission checklists – Develop electronic checklists for fees and submission requirement.

Application Review Improvements

Application review is the process of reviewing the application and related submissions for completeness and accuracy. Many of the information items currently checked manually can be checked electronically in an electronic submission environment. However, some items will continue to require review by a planner or reviewer.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Conduct application review pilot – Conduct a pilot project for application review using plan review and mark up capabilities of the DRP ECM.

BENEFITS

Viability of plan review/mark up software – Tests the viability of using plan review and mark up software included in the DRP ECM with actual application review processes.

Prepares staff for transition – Provides an opportunity to evaluate the impact and changes staff will experience in shifting to electronic plan review.

Better collaboration - Provides an opportunity to promote better collaboration between departments and applicants using an electronic tool for plan review.

PLAN

Conduct pilot – Define and conduct a pilot project which tests the viability of using plan review and mark up software in the entitlement process.

Change management – Assess the change management issues of migrating plan reviews to an electronic format.

Conceptual Plan

The Stakeholder Committee was very supportive of a new, optional Conceptual Plan step in the land entitlement process. It was the Stakeholders Committee’s opinion that such a process would likely reduce the overall time required to process a project and would result in reduced costs. The primary objective of the Conceptual Plan is to allow applicants and the County to iron out design issues before large expenditures are made on detailed engineering plans.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Conceptual Plan – Create a new, optional step in the Land Entitlement (Subdivisions, permits, major projects) process for reviewing a Conceptual Plan.

BENEFITS

Review plan at the concept level – Provides developers an opportunity to present their conceptual plans for review prior to making large investments in engineering a complete plan.

County input – Provides the opportunity for County staff to provide substantive design comment on plans prior to a major investment in engineering services, promoting better projects.

Citizen input – Provides a potential vehicle for citizens to provide input to the developer early in the design process before developers have made substantial engineering investments.

Reduces Tentative Map resubmissions – Possible reduction in the number of resubmissions required to get a Tentative Map cleared for Public Hearing.

PLAN

Define Conceptual Plan – Develop a definition of the conceptual plan, define the submission requirements, develop a review process and define the response format.

Legal issues – Review with the County Counsel any legal issues related to the use of a Conceptual Plan review process.

Conduct pilots – Working with the Stakeholders Committee identify opportunities to conduct pilot reviews of Conceptual Plans for real projects.

Tentative Map Simplification

Another opportunity for reduced time and cost was to simplify the Tentative Map process by reducing the level of engineering required during the Tentative Map review and approval process. This could also increase the willingness of applicants to make project changes if they had not invested so heavily in engineering services at this stage in the process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Tentative Map simplification – Develop a plan for reducing the level of engineering detail required for a Tentative Map.

Submission requirements – Reduce the number of copies of the Tentative Map that must be submitted for new submissions and revisions.

BENEFITS

Reduced cost to prepare Tentative Maps – Reducing the level of detail engineering in the Tentative Map will substantially reduce the developers cost and the time to prepare a submission.

Paper reduction – Reducing the number of copies submitted will substantially reduce paper costs for the developers and storage costs for the County.

Resistance to changing project designs – Simplification could potentially reduce resistance to changing project designs.

PLANS

Re-Define Tentative Map standards – Develop a new definition of the Tentative Map, define the submission requirements, develop a review process and define the response format.

Legal issues – Review with the County Counsel any legal issues related to the modification of the Tentative Map review process and/or requirements.

Conduct pilots – Working with the Stakeholders Committee identify opportunities to conduct pilot reviews of new Tentative Maps for real projects.

Substantial Conformance Standards

Another set of recommendations for the Stakeholder Committee related to changes in the process for determining Substantial Conformance. It was felt that the process could be improved if the basis of determining Substantial Conformance could be modified to allow ranges of conformance for design issues that were considered to have a minor impact on the overall quality and appearance of the project. Also, there were concerns about making changes to the process to accommodate projects that have already been approved and will become active when the recession is over and the building industry begins to recover.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Revised substantial conformance standards – Develop and document revised standards for determination of substantial conformance.

Post recession standards for substantial conformance – Develop standards and procedures for dealing with post recession Final Map submissions for downsized projects.

BENEFITS

Increased flexibility – Revised standards for determining substantial conformance would provide developers with more flexibility to alter plans to address minor changes after Tentative Map approval.

Reduced cost – Reduced cost by eliminating expensive plan resubmissions and revised plan reviews.

Earlier project starts for post recession projects – Projects which have received approval of their Tentative Maps could start sooner if provisions are made for modifying substantial conformance determination for “downsized” post recession projects.

Increased Public Use Land – Downsized projects may contribute additional land for public uses such as open spaces, environmental zones, parks, etc.

PLAN

Re-Define Substantial Conformance standards – Develop a new definition of substantial conformance, define the submission requirements, develop a review process and define the response format.

Legal issues – Review with the County Counsel any legal issues related to the modification of the substantial conformance determination process.

Conduct pilots – Working with the Stakeholders Committee identify opportunities to conduct pilot reviews of new substantial conformance determinations for real projects.

Fee Management

The entire process of fee management was a concern of the Stakeholders Committee. This included fee calculation, fee collection and drawdown account management. There was also an interest in the County establishing a formal process for fee justification and fee increase review.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Fee management programs – Develop new policies and procedures to improve the overall collection of fees and cost recovery.

BENEFITS

Increased revenues – Increase the percentage of actual cost recovered for drawdown accounts

Reasonable fee analysis – Provides improved fee collection information to determine the reasonableness of current fees and proposed fees

PLAN

Improve cost recovery – Develop new policies and procedures for billable time collection for drawdown accounts

More frequent timekeeping - Implement more frequent time recording practices and recording time in smaller increments when charging to drawdown accounts.

Activity tracking – Implement improve activity tracking for fixed fee services to better report costs incurred for fixed fee activities.

Develop ongoing fee management practices – Develop a plan for ongoing fee management including fee setting, fee adjustments and complete descriptions of what fees cover and what they do not cover.

Park Fee Calculation

The current system for calculating in lieu Park Fees is in danger of failing completely. This is a minor application but it should be replaced before it completely ceases to operate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Park fee calculation program – Redevelop the current in lieu Park Fee calculation program.

BENEFITS

Avoid system failure – The current system used to calculate in lieu Park Fees is in danger of failing completely.

PLANS

System specifications – Develop system specification for the in lieu Park Fee calculation process including GIS capabilities

Contract for services – Contract for services from a systems and programming organization to re-develop the in lieu Park Fee application using current technology.

Forms and Instructions

The entire process for forms and instructions needs to be reviewed and revised to make the forms and instructions more customer focused.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Forms revisions – Develop new forms for all applications using Adobe fillable forms and post these forms on the DRP web site for customer use.

Forms instructions – Develop new instructions for preparing all forms and post on DRP web site.

BENEFITS

Reduced time and cost – Fillable forms could reduce the time and cost of completing forms for customers.

Improved accuracy – Electronic forms are more accurate, can be loaded directly into the ECM and new instructions would improve the content of the forms submitted.

PLAN

Define a forms improvement program – Develop a plan for systematically converting each form to an Adobe fillable form format, developing documentation and writing instructions for the form. This should include priorities, implementation and public information.

Internal Documentation

There are substantial weaknesses in the current internal documentation of Land Entitlement processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Documentation standards – Develop standards for creating and maintaining procedures documentation.

Produce documentation – Produce documentation for internal use for each of the Land Entitlement processes.

BENEFITS

More consistent operations – Having standard documentation on all processes will produce more standard and consistent delivery of services to the applicants and citizens.

Improved Training – Having standard documentation will provide the basis for improved and consistent training of new personnel.

PLAN

Define a documentation improvement program – Develop a program for systematically documenting each of the Land Entitlement processes.

Develop cross department documentation of all processes – Develop documentation for all processes including cross departmental interactions.

Develop standards for service quality – Develop standards for customer service and responsiveness and define those in the documentation.

Quality improvement and problem resolution – Form a quality improvement and problem resolution group to address issues

Referrals

The Subdivision Committee was critical of the current process for processing referrals through other agencies. It frequently causes last minute delays and problems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Referral requirements – Document all referral requirements by Land Entitlement process.

Referral MOUs – Develop policies and procedures for creating Memos of Understanding (MOUs) with referral agencies.

Create pilot MOUs – Select a small number of referral agencies and develop pilot MOUs

Implement MOUs – Implement the pilot MOUs

Referral tracking – Create a referral tracking system using the new DRP ECM.

BENEFITS

Consistent referral responses – Provide consistent referral responses from referral agencies in a timely manner.

PLANS

Draft model MOU – Draft a model MOU for use with referral agencies.

Review with County Counsel – Review draft MOU with County Counsel to determine any legal issues.

Implement MOU pilots – Implement MOUs with a small number of referral agencies.

Hearings

The Hearing process can be improved through the use of electronic Hearing packets and materials.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Electronic Hearing packets – Create standards for producing electronic Hearing packets.

Implement Hearing packets - Begin production of electronic Hearing packet materials and posting them on the DRP web site.

Hearing packet pilots - Conduct pilot project with one or more Planning Commissioners.

BENEFITS

Reduction in paper – Electronic Hearing packets will reduce the amount of paper used.

Better public access – Posting Hearing packets on the DRP web site will improve the public’s access to the information.

Electronic Hearing Room - Increases the use of the facilities in the new electronically enabled Hearing Room.

PLAN

Model Electronic Hearing packet – Develop a model electronic Hearing packet for review with Stakeholders Committee, Hearing Officers and Planning Commissioners.

Implement on ECM – Implement a pilot of the electronic Hearing packet using the new ECM.

Conduct pilot projects – Conduct a pilot project with one or more of the Planning Commissioners.

Performance Metrics and Measurements

The Stakeholders Committee felt that increased use of performance metrics could help to improve the County processes and provide the basis for establishing future fee levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Performance Measurement Standards – Develop performance measurement standards.

BENEFITS

Provides guidelines – Provides guidelines for performance measurements that should be incorporated into all new technology solutions.

PLAN

Develop guidelines – Develop guidelines for performance measurement across all business functions within Land Entitlement processes.

Implement guidelines - Implement performance measurements following the guidelines in all ECM pilot projects.